

News Release



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Berkeley Teens 'Pedaling for Peace' Reach Their 600-mile Goal

SANTEE, Calif. – Seventeen inner-city Berkeley High School students today completed a 600-mile "Pedaling for Peace" trek from Berkeley to Santee, a journey they hoped would draw attention to the plague of youth violence, and at the same time project positive images of inner-city teenagers of color.

For some of the students, the trek was their first time out of the San Francisco Bay Area. None of the students had experience in long-distance bicycle rides. Their bicycles were donated by the Berkeley Police Department.

The Berkeley students were welcomed at a ceremony at Santana High School by State Parks Director Rusty Areias, who arranged for them to camp at state parks along their journey, as well as Santana High School Principal Karen Degischer and Santee Mayor Randy Voepel.

"When I helped send you off in Berkeley two weeks ago, I said that many of you would have life-changing experiences as you pedaled down California's majestic coastline," Areias told the students. "Today I have heard of some of those experiences. We at State Parks join people throughout California in expressing our congratulations for your accomplishment. We're all very proud of you."

Areias delivered to each of the students a personal letter signed by Gov. Gray Davis and First Lady Sharon Davis. "This 600-mile journey from Berkeley High School to Santana High School is a tribute to the determination and strength of our future California leaders," the letter said in part.

The ride was sponsored by the Berkeley Police Department's Police Activities League, the East Bay Asian Youth Center and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Both the Berkeley Police Department Police Activities League and the California Department of Parks and Recreation Police Activities League are affiliates of the California Police Activities League. Today's event in Santee also was sponsored by the Grossmont Union High School District and Heartland Human Relations and Fair Housing.

The students came up with the theme for the ride following the shooting at Santana High School in Santee last March that left two students dead and a 15-year-old in custody and charged with the

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crime. The Berkeley students hoped their effort would focus attention on the problem of youth violence as well as offer a positive message.

“You see most students of color fighting each other,” said Aramon Bartholomeau, 16, a junior at Berkeley High School who completed the ride. “And we're not all about that. I hope that my participating in this can help counteract negative stereotypes held by some members of our community.”

Evelyn Del Cid, a 17-year-old senior at Berkeley High School, said she hoped her participation helped individuals who were affected by the shooting at Santana High School. “I want to help others and challenge myself physically and mentally as well,” she said.

Guadalupe Ramirez, 15, a sophomore, said, “I want to prove to people that not all teens are violent because of their color, age or sex. I want to make a difference in someone's heart by showing them love, support and friendship.”

Several chaperones made the ride with the students, including a Berkeley Police officer, a registered nurse and a teacher. Adriana Betti, managing director of the East Bay Asian Youth Center in Berkeley, also rode the distance.

“Youth need accessible programs with adult mentors that can help guide them through their confusing years,” Betti said. “I struggle to process the violence I have seen and been a part of. I know how these events can impact the character of a teenager. I have had to attend many sad occasions involving teenagers.

“I am happy to participate with young people in a way that creatively helps them address attitude, violence, and character,” Betti said. “It also shows the nation that given support, youth of color can work hard, be positive, caring and non-violent.”

In a show of their own support for the effort, teenagers from the Los Angeles Police Department Explorer Program joined the Berkeley cyclists when they reached Los Angeles late last week. Many students kept journals during the journey.

“The route went through lots of farm land that was new for some of the kids to see,” wrote one student. “This trip is so amazing in terms of all the support we have received. On the road several bike shops have been just fantastic in terms of stopping their work and taking our bikes in and doing minor repairs.”

Chaperones said the students, even when suffering from minor injuries, insisted that they ride.

“At one point I was going to call it quits, but something inside me told me to go on, and I did,” wrote one student, who said during the trip she had carried a letter from her mom that “gave me some great advice. She told me to keep my head up and always have faith in myself,” she said.

Another student wrote, “Pedaling harder, pedaling faster, pedaling as far as we can, we will always be pedaling for peace.”